

CHANNEL ISLANDS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY
Sanctuary Advisory Council
Meeting of the Subcommittee on Sanctuary Visibility and Marketability
September 10, 2012 -- 6:00 to 8:00 pm
Santa Barbara Zoo, 500 Niños Drive, Santa Barbara, California

Meeting Notes

I. Setting the Stage

Introductions: Who's here, and why?

Sanctuary Staff: Chris Mobley, Mike Murray, Shauna Bingham, Julie Bursek, Sara Hutto.

SAC members present, and introductions:

Michael Cohen – Michael reported that he is here because he owns a small business that has guided 4,000 people sea cave kayaking on the islands this year. He hopes to share his marketing experience and connection to the Board of Directors of the Santa Barbara Conference and Visitors Bureau.

Andrea Mills – Andrea stated that she wants to be a part of this because Island Packers provides the sanctuary with the most physical visibility to visitors.

Rich Block – Rich reported that the SB Zoo does a lot of marketing with the goal to use the zoo as a launch pad for visitors to be inspired to go out and really experience nature. With around 450,000 guests per year, Rich and his staff feel that “zoos are nature’s largest billboard”.

Susan Curtis – As a land use planner with the County of Santa Barbara, Susan has done a lot of media and outreach, and developed the 2012 census multimedia communications campaign, during which she learned a lot about free media options that she can share.

Amanda Allen – As a Sanctuary partner, the Ty Warner Sea Center recently launched an MPA exhibit. Amanda is interested to learn about marketing strategies and apply what she learns to the Sea Center.

Maria Petuelli – As a member of the Sanctuary Education Team, Maria hopes to provide a link between the SET and this subcommittee and she stated that there marketing ties into a lot of education programs.

Eric Kett (on phone) – Because visibility and marketing are a national sanctuary priority, Eric hopes to be involved with developing marketing strategies that can be shared at a national SAC Summit meeting coming up in December.

Phyllis Grifman (on phone) – Interested in elevating public knowledge of the sanctuary.

Current Sanctuary Situation

Chris Mobley, Sanctuary Superintendent, spoke regarding the urgency to increase awareness and visibility of the Sanctuary. This is partially due to budget realities; with no increase since 2006, most of our contractors are gone and our research vessel is barely operating. He continued that there is a sense of urgency on the national level to develop new funding opportunities and new partnerships. He emphasized that we need sustainable, long-term ideas that won't fizzle out. A few of his suggestions were to learn from other sanctuaries sites, partner with local hotels, and use the skills and expertise of the members of this subcommittee. We need to better understand our audience, the best way to reach them, and our key partners. He continued that national marine sanctuaries are very innovative, but sometimes they develop short-term ideas that fizzle over the longer term. Chris would rather see fewer, more quality ideas come out of this group that can be sustainable. He also

requested that the subcommittee keep the Channel Islands Sanctuary Foundation in mind regarding issues such as the cultivation of partners and movement of money, and to expect to work with Harry Rabin, the new liaison to the foundation.

Eric Kett asked what we had in mind in terms of increasing marketability – increasing visitorship? He expressed caution regarding an emphasis on more visitors, and worried that higher level government officials may see an opportunity to impose user fees for the sanctuary. He suggested that the group remember and stress the idea that the sanctuary is important to the community and needs to keep it funded and open to the public; we don't want to misrepresent the marketing issue. Shauna Bingham added that another goal should be stewardship, not just visitorship. Andrea Mills added that the group needs to define which audience to market to before determining the tools to use.

Presentation: “*Sustaining Our Sanctuary Communities: Perspectives from the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary*” (May 2011)

Mike Murray gave a brief presentation to the subcommittee regarding the relevance and importance of CINMS to the community, a talk he gave last year at the annual SAC Summit. Some suggestions and goals he gave were to broaden our sphere of partners, stay rooted in our community focus, continue work with the SAC, and to bring the greater NOAA to the community (in addition to the Sanctuaries program).

Group Discussion

Chris Mobley suggested that it would be good for the group to know where the sanctuary is starting from, including what we already have to work with and some of our lessons learned. He reminded everyone that we are not starting from zero and that sanctuary staff do a lot of marketing and outreach. He suggested that maybe the group should focus on how to make current work more effective instead of creating new programs or ideas. Julie Bursek added that we could improve our relationship with some sectors of the community (e.g. inland Californians that use these waters for boating) and that sometimes not being the lead, but being present while encouraging others, is most effective. Michael Cohen suggested that the group get involved in all the surrounding cities' CBBs (conference and business bureaus). The subcommittee briefly discussed the end goals, and whether revenue increase, or just visibility increase would be the focus.

II. Getting Organized

Identification of Subcommittee goal(s)

Mike Murray presented the following DRAFT goal as a place to start:

Develop and recommend to the Sanctuary Advisory Council strategies and actions for enhancing the visibility and marketability of the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary. Ideally, implementation of the group's recommendations would:

- *be done in a collaborative, partnership-based fashion;*
- *be feasible despite limited available sanctuary resources;*
- *compliment and be supported by the Channel Islands National Park;*
- *represent and be perceived as fair play;*
- *help stabilize and sustain sanctuary programs that are valuable to the community;*
- *enhance the value of the sanctuary for local businesses and organizations; and*
- *strengthen and increase the local support base for the sanctuary.*

Consideration of this goal was given by the group, but there was no suggested editing or adoption of it at this meeting. Rather, it sparked conversation about a variety of marketing approaches that might have value for the sanctuary.

Susan Curtis: People will invest in what they value; what is valuable to the community.

Chris Mobley: It's important to find ways for people to take action (e.g., make a small donation) that are effective, but not "annoying" and not apt to create conflicts with other partners.

Amanda Allen: Success for us is more than just getting people into the Sea Center, but having them leave with an emotional connection. And everyone is different.

Rich Block: This is a very different sort of marketing challenge. We need to be clear about how success would be measured. Maybe we go to what Jim Collins (author, Good to Great, and other books) refers to as the "hedgehog" -- the one thing you do better than anyone else. At the Zoo, we create "high quality experiences that bring people and wildlife together". So success can be measured simply by answering "are you doing what you are best at?" Ideally sanctuary partners could be carrying the freight (on marketing), with sanctuary staff orchestrating.

Chris Mobley: This place and this sanctuary are very special. With budget cuts we have been forced to hand off more of our programs to partners, and it is difficult.

Rich Block: Think of the possibility of CINMS being more like a wholesaler of sanctuary products and tools. For example, posting the PDF version of Sanctuary Watch [a quarterly newsletter produced at ONMS headquarters] on 150 partner web sites (all of whom should be linking their sites to CINMS), and then letting those partners do the promotional work (including via social media). You want to infect and influence the message through the "retailers." It results in a better message too, because it's not just the sanctuary saying that the sanctuary is a good thing.

Chris Mobley: To do that well, we need a good understanding of the interests and needs of these partners and potential retailers.

Julie Bursek: Agreed, for example we could assess the utility/need for our MPA outreach products. Shauna Bingham: It would be helpful to have assistance with review and evaluation of the tools we've used for outreach/marketing.

Michael Cohen: Through all of this we also need to find streams of funding that come back into the programs. This needs to be sustainable.

Rich Block: At the Zoo he practices what author Jim Collins calls "productive paranoia" -- throwing out everything that can happen/go wrong and making a plan for dealing with it.

Rich Block: The sanctuary could become the source of information that others will value and consider essential. When that happens, then you can let your partners carry the ball.

Phyllis Grifman: We may want to do more market research, perhaps with focus groups or surveys. It may be wise to gather more information about what people know and what they value about the sanctuary.

Susan Curtis: And perhaps the group to focus such a survey on could be the sanctuary partners and “retailers”.

Eric Kett: The sanctuary has been missing the biggest user group – the fishing community. They don’t wish to support CINMS. If we promote the sanctuary for fishing (it has the best fishing in the world, recreationally and commercially) then a lot of support could come forward. Consider also that divers from out of state make up most of the paying customers on local dive boats.

Rich Block: [in response to questions] Reading recommendations: Good to Great, How the Mighty Fall, and Great by Choice by Jim Collins. Available from jimcollins.com.

Information Needs:

The subcommittee discussed the type of information they would like to receive in order to move forward. Staff will gather and send these materials, as possible, to the subcommittee in advance the next meeting.

Specific informational needs identified:

- Additional information from staff about CINMS programs, including marketing tools currently used (e.g., Sanctuary Watch newsletter from ONMS headquarters)
- CINMS online statistics and visibility (web, social media, other).
- Channel Islands Sanctuary Foundation (role and plans).
- Information about how other sanctuary sites (e.g., Gulf of the Farallones) have sustained key programs using entrepreneurial approaches.
- Information from ONMS headquarters on what’s being done to increase sanctuary visibility nationally.
- A list of places where CINMS has a presence (centers, museums, exhibits, signs, materials stocked, events worked, etc.)
- A list of CINMS memberships in tourism boards (and similar organizations).
- Any slogans that we use, or statements that communicate our “hedgehog”.

Subcommittee or Working Group:

Mike Murray explained the basic differences between a SAC Subcommittee (council members only) and a SAC Working Group (open to non-SAC members, meets in public). The group preferred to remain a subcommittee for now, and to delay any formation of a working group until the goals and strategies are better organized and identified. The group also decided to appoint a chair at a later date.

Future Meetings:

It was agreed that in order to determine the best date for the next meeting, Mike Murray will send out a doodle poll for options in October. The group discussed meeting options, and some members requested that a conference call or webinar be set up to facilitate those that would have to travel. Rich Block offered to have the group come back to the Zoo.